Men Behaving Badly

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For the American version, see Men Behaving Badly (American TV series).

Men Behaving Badly is a British sitcom that was created and written by Simon Nye. It follows the lives of Gary Strang (Martin Clunes) and his flatmates Dermot Povey (Harry Enfield; series 1 only) and Tony Smart (Neil Morrissey; series 2 onwards). It was first broadcast on ITV in 1992. A total of six series were made, along with a Christmas special and a trilogy of episodes that make up the feature-length "last orders".

The series was filmed in and around Ealing in West London[*citation needed*]. The setting, however, is implied to be South London, and many references are made to Surrey. It was produced by Hartswood Films in association with Thames for the first two series on ITV. They also assisted with production of the third series onwards that aired on the BBC, after Thames had lost their regional ITV franchise for London weekdays at the end of 1992 to Carlton Television.

Men Behaving Badly became highly successful after being moved to a post-watershed slot on BBC1. It won the Comedy Awards' best ITV comedy and the first National Television Award for Situation Comedy.[1]

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Men Behaving Badly	
Series logo, which appears before the closing credits rolled. Gary and Tony dance badly in the background.	
Created by	Simon Nye
Written by	Simon Nye
Directed by	Martin Dennis
Starring	Martin Clunes Neil Morrissey Leslie Ash Caroline Quentin Harry Enfield
Country of origin	United Kingdom
Original language	English
No. of seasons	6
No. of episodes	42 (list of episodes)
Production	
Producer	Beryl Vertue
Running time	30 minutes
Production company	Hartswood Films in association with Thames
Distributor	Fremantle licensed by BBC Studios
Release	
Original network	ITV (1992) BBC1 (1994–1998) Channel 4 (2014)
Picture format	4:3 (1992–1997) 16:9 (1998)
Original release	18 February 1992 – 28 December 1998 17 October 2014 (Special)
Chronology	
Related shows	*Men Behaving Badly* (US remake)

Plot summary [edit]

Gary and Dermot are two London-based, beer-guzzling flatmates who typically spend most of their time in front of the television or in pursuit of women. When Deborah - an attractive, single woman - moves into the flat above, both men become obsessed with her, despite Gary already having a steady girlfriend, Dorothy.

When series two begins, it is revealed Dermot has left to travel the world, leading Gary to look for a new flatmate. Record stall owner Tony Smart then moves in and, although Gary is unsure of him at first, the two soon become good friends, revelling in a second childhood, hours of TV and mindless talks about women. Tony quickly becomes obsessed with Deborah and, unlike with Dermot, she initially shows an interest in return. However, Tony's immaturity quickly drives her to distraction, and his pursuit of Deborah becomes increasingly one-sided.

Gary manages an office selling security equipment for a dead-end company. His staff of ageing employees are the meek George and lifelong spinster Anthea, who regularly drive him to frustration with their old-fashioned views. Tony stumbles through a range of jobs including as a model, barman, mime artist and postman, after his record stall collapses.

Dorothy is an intelligent and mature nurse, and it is stated one of the main reasons she went out with Gary was because he annoyed her parents. She and Gary frequently split up and are occasionally unfaithful, including one night when Dorothy sleeps with Tony, but they always end up back together. Tony has many girlfriends but his true feelings are for Deborah, whom he initially just wants to have sex with, but quickly falls in love with in spite of her generally poor treatment of him. Deborah is often disappointed by Tony's juvenile behaviour, but can also see his good side. The two finally end up in a relationship in series six.

Although Dorothy initially dislikes Deborah (disparagingly referring to her as "Miss Wet Dream" in series two), the two bond over their shared frustration at the two men and develop a strong friendship, eventually becoming flatmates themselves.

Cast [edit]

- Martin Clunes plays Gary Strang, manager of a security sales office with two old-fashioned, middle-aged subordinates. He owns the flat that he shares with Dermot, and later Tony. He is in a long-term, albeit off-and-on, relationship with Dorothy. Gary is arrogant and immature for his age, which frequently causes annoyance to Dorothy.
- Harry Enfield plays Dermot Povey, Gary's original flatmate, in series one. Dermot is forever failing to pay his rent and is desperately in love with Deborah. He leaves for a round-the-world motorbike tour. Unlike Tony, Dermot seems to come from a similar background to Gary.
- Neil Morrissey plays Tony Smart from series two onwards. Tony is Gary's womanising flatmate, who is infatuated with Deborah. He is well meaning, but has a habit of annoying those around him with his thoughtless comments and off-the-wall behaviour. He also has musical ambitions which are not matched by his abilities.
- Leslie Ash plays Deborah Burton, an attractive blonde woman who lives in the flat above Gary and Tony. Deborah works in a restaurant, and although attracted to Tony, his immaturity, devil-may-care attitude and other aspects of his character push her away.
- Caroline Quentin plays Dorothy Martin/Bishop, Gary's outspoken girlfriend. She is a nurse who initially lives with her parents, before moving in with Gary and Tony in series five. She later makes friends with Deborah, eventually becoming her flatmate.
- Ian Lindsay plays George, an employee with old fashioned views at Gary's security firm. George is married to the unseen Marjorie, with whom he has a son.
- Valerie Minifie plays Anthea, an employee at Gary's security firm with views similar to George. Anthea is a lifelong spinster.
- Dave Atkins plays Les, the landlord of The Crown, Gary and Tony's local pub, who is briefly Tony's boss. His appalling hygiene standards are matched by the run-down and unkempt nature of the pub.
- John Thomson plays Ken, Les' successor as landlord of The Crown, from series five onwards. He appears to know nothing about the pub trade - admitting he got the job because his brother-in-law was sleeping with the personnel officer at the brewery - and his attempts to modernise the pub are undermined by his lack of experience in the role. He is also briefly Tony's boss.

Episodes [edit]

Main article: List of Men Behaving Badly episodes

The show aired for six series and forty-two episodes, including a Christmas special titled 'Jingle Balls', which was broadcast over Christmas 1997. A final short run of three 45-minute episodes was made in 1998 to conclude the series.

Series one was the only series to feature Dermot, played by Harry Enfield before Neil Morrissey joined the cast as Tony. The episodes of the first two series are about 24 minutes long because they were shown on ITV and time was needed for advertisements. When the show began on the BBC, the episodes were about four minutes longer.

Production [edit]

Men Behaving Badly is based on Simon Nye's 1989 book of the same title. Producer Beryl Vertue first considered it for a film before deciding it was suited for television adaptation. Harry Enfield, already a well-known comedian, was cast first. He had seen Martin Clunes perform in a play and recommended him for the other lead.[2][3]

Enfield felt out of place in the sitcom and announced he was leaving after the first series.[2][a] When Thames Television found out, their immediate reaction was to end the series, and they had to be persuaded to put on a second series, with Neil Morrissey replacing Enfield. After Thames lost their television franchise, ITV decided that a peak viewing figure of 7 million was insufficient and withdrew support. Incensed, Vertue approached the BBC who agreed to broadcast the show.[3]

In 1994, the BBC aired the first of a further four series. The shift to a new station and a later time slot meant, as the BBC have stated, the show could indulge in "more colourful language and behaviour".[2] The show became highly successful on BBC1, drawing a cult following.[4]

In 2002 it was revealed that Simon Nye and the cast had agreed to revive the series for three further specials the following year, in which Vertue wanted the show to focus on how Gary and Dorothy were coping with parenthood.[5] The idea was shelved the following year after Caroline Quentin became pregnant.[6] In October 2014, Clunes and Morrissey returned to the characters of Gary and Tony for the first time since 1998 in a sketch for Channel 4's "The Feeling Nuts Comedy Night" and *Stand Up to Cancer* telethon.[7]

The first series featuring Enfield has never been repeated on the BBC, although the second ITV series has been shown.[2]

Reception [edit]

A BBC article suggests that Gary and Tony were "a reaction against the onset of the caring, sharing 'new man'. It appeared to revel in a politically incorrect world of booze, burps and boobs". Critics Jon Lewis and Penny Stempel have stated that the show "allowed male viewers to indulge in vicarious laddism, whilst allowing female viewers to ridicule the bad but lovable Tony and Gary". They further commented that "it was also a genuine sitcom in that the humour came from the characters and their context". Simon Nye remarked: "I don't do mad, plot-driven farrago. You have to allow your characters time to talk."[1]

Men Behaving Badly boosted the acting careers of all four of the main cast. The final episode in 1998 drew 13.9 million viewers. The show was criticised by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents for its portrayal of a "lad's culture of boozing and irresponsibility".[4]

Book and audio releases [edit]

A companion guide to the show, *The A–Z of Behaving Badly* was released on 1 November 1995. It features many handy tips from Gary and Tony and was written by Simon Nye. On 27 July 2000, two audio compilations were released featuring eight shows from series three and four.

A script book entitled *The Best of Men Behaving Badly* was released on 5 October 2000. It contains 25 of the 42 scripts, along with some new material, black and white pictures, and introductions by Simon Nye.

Home media [edit]

All six series are available on region 2 DVD separately, and a complete collection featuring all six series is also available. The 1997 Christmas special and final trilogy 'Last Orders!' are also available on DVD.

While the rest of the series was shot in 4:3, the 3 episodes making up 'Last Orders!' are the only ones filmed in widescreen. However, the episodes are cropped for the DVD release. Owing to licensing difficulties, the music at the beginning of episode one 'Hair' and the rave in episode five 'Cardigan' had to be changed for the Series 5 DVD.

The entire series is also currently available on Netflix UK, featuring the original broadcast episodes now licensed by BBC Studios.[8] The episode 'Jingle Balls!/The Big Christmas Box' is listed as the 7th episode of Series 6 under the title 'Merry Christmas'. 'Last Orders!' is available to view in widescreen for the first time since broadcast.

DVD Title	Discs	Year	Episodes	DVD release dates		
				Region 1	Region 2	Region 4
Complete Series 1	1	1992	6	25 January 2005	8 May 2000	14 August 2000
Complete Series 2	1	1992	6	25 January 2005	5 June 2000	14 August 2000
Complete Series 3	1	1994	6	10 January 2006	5 June 2000	14 August 2000
Complete Series 4	1	1995	7	10 January 2006	3 July 2000	14 August 2000
Complete Series 5	1	1996	7	7 November 2006	3 July 2000	14 August 2000

Complete Series 6	1	1997	6	7 November 2006	20 November 2000	14 August 2000
Jingle Balls!	1	1997	1	On "Last Orders" DVD	1 January 2008	N/A
Last Orders	1	1998	3	7 November 2006	1 September 2003	14 August 2000
Complete Series 1–6	6	1992–1997	38	N/A	22 September 2003	September 2020
Complete Series 1–LO	7	1992–1998	42	7 November 2006	29 October 2012	8 August 2001

U.S. version [edit]

Main article: Men Behaving Badly (American TV series)

The series was remade for American television, broadcast on NBC 1996–1997, and starred Rob Schneider, Ken Marino, Ron Eldard and Justine Bateman.[9] The humour was not appreciated by US audiences and the remake was cancelled after two seasons.[4] The original series was eventually screened in the US on BBC America as *British Men Behaving Badly*. In Australia, where the British version was screened under its original title on the ABC, the US series was broadcast as *It's a Man's World* on the Seven Network.

Notes [edit]

a. ^ Vertue has since said that Enfield never intended to stay for more than one series.[3]

References [edit]

1. ^ a b Jon E. Lewis; Penny Stempel (1 January 1999). *Cult television: the comedies*. Pavilion. ISBN 9781862052451.
2. ^ a b c d "BBC — Comedy — Men Behaving Badly". BBC. 28 October 2014. Retrieved 11 July 2017.
3. ^ a b c "How we made Men Behaving Badly". *The Guardian*. 18 March 2013. Retrieved 11 July 2017.
4. ^ a b c "Return for the men behaving less badly". *The Telegraph*. 8 July 2002. Retrieved 11 July 2017.
5. ^ "Men to Behave Badly again". *BBC News*. BBC. 5 May 2002. Retrieved 14 October 2014.
6. ^ "Going Badly: Sitcom return shelved". *Chortle*. 23 February 2003. Retrieved 14 October 2014.
7. ^ "Men Behaving Badly return for charity sketch". *BBC News*. BBC. 13 October 2014. Retrieved 14 October 2014.
8. ^ "Netflix in May: Every new TV show and film coming this month from Love Island and 13 Reasons Why to Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt". *The Independent*. 2 May 2018. Retrieved 2 May 2018.
9. ^ "Men Behaving Badly (US)". *TV.com*. CBS Interactive. Retrieved 11 July 2017.

External links [edit]

- Official *Men Behaving Badly* web site
- *Men Behaving Badly* at IMDb
- *Men Behaving Badly* at epguides.com
- *Men Behaving Badly* at British Comedy Guide
- *Men Behaving Badly* at British TV Comedy Guide
- *Men Behaving Badly* at BBC Online
- *Men Behaving Badly* at BBC Online

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